

WILKINSBURG BOROUGH
Council Work Session
December 3, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 pm in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were Mr. Lefebvre, Mr. Taiani, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, and President McCarthy-Johnson. Administrative Assistant Cindy Bahn and Finance Director Dave Egler were also present. Mayor John Thompson and Ms. Garrett were absent. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge of allegiance, a moment of silence was observed to remember victims of violent crime.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. **Kate Luxemburg – 432 Rebecca Avenue**

RE: Request to purchase Borough-owned property – 176-C-285

Ms. Luxemburg noted that Mr. Taiani wants to purchase the property and build a garage on it, which would return it to the tax rolls. She stated that a nearby property, owned by the Landons, also has a garage, and would be a more suitable property for Mr. Taiani's purposes.

CAPITAL PLANNING

Mr. Shattuck noted that there is not much to report, as the Borough is nearing the end of its most recent bond. He reported that the recent notification from Standard & Poors setting the Borough's bond rating at A Stable is positive, and will be good for future bond issues. Ms. Macklin commented that there is no funding allocated for paving in the 2015 budget, and suggested that the Borough should issue another bond to pay for paving. The question was raised about a bond issue as separate from the budget. Mr. Egler responded that a line item for a bond can always be put into a budget, and if the bond isn't floated, there is no harm. He noted that in regards to street paving, engineers like to have the information late in the year so that they can hit the ground running when the weather breaks in the spring. Mr. Lefebvre asked if the 2011 bond was in the budget, and Mr. Egler responded that he did not think so. Mr. Shattuck noted that the debt service would be the equivalent of 1.5 mils, and the Borough would either need to generate additional

revenue or make cuts in the budget. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson asked that Mr. Egler investigate how the 2011 bond issue was handled in the budget. Ms. Macklin remarked that the Borough Engineer usually gives us an accounting at this time of year regarding grants he has submitted on behalf of the Borough. She asked if he could attend the next meeting to give a report. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson stated that the Borough needs to use committees, authorities and boards to accomplish this, and noted that she would like to have a discussion about the authorities, boards, and commissions, and whether or not they are going the right way.

FINANCE

Mr. Lefebvre noted that Council will vote on the 2015 budget at the meeting of December 10, 2014. He requested that any council members who have questions or concerns direct those to Council, the Borough Manager and the Finance Director. Ms. Macklin asked if Mr. Egler has a current number on delinquent taxes, and Mr. Egler responded that he could provide that number tomorrow. Ms. Macklin also asked if the Borough has had any further contact with the Business Privilege Tax collector, and Mr. Egler responded that the Borough Manager may know. Ms. Macklin asked if there is any comparative data between 2013 and 2014, and Mr. Egler responded that he is not holding any bills back and that finances are in good shape. Ms. Macklin then inquired if the Borough's finances are being impacted by the change in tax collectors, and Mr. Egler replied that they are not.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. McCarthy-Johnson noted that Chief Coleman and Lieutenant Krempasky were present from the Police Department. Chief Coleman remarked that she had questions about the 2015 budget, and that she would email them to Mr. Lefebvre. Mr. Taiani stated that Council will be doing some budget cutting, and that the Police Department is one of the biggest items in the budget. In response to a question, Chief Coleman reported that the Department has 13 vehicles in their fleet; Mr. Taiani inquired how many officers are on duty each shift, and the Chief responded with 6 or 7. Mr. Taiani asked if all the vehicles remain on-site, and the Chief replied that only her vehicle is permitted to be driven off-site. Mr. Taiani noted that Council needs a cost/benefit analysis, and the Chief replied that that was given to Council 3 years ago. The Chief noted that the Department has 2 vehicles obtained through grants, and that there are 5 people in the Department who write grants. She further stated that 2 police vehicles are not Borough vehicles as they were obtained as a result of drug busts. She asked that Council not cut the fat from the Police Department. Mr. Taiani stated that he knows the officers do not have video in their vehicles, and his belief that they should. The Chief responded that as long as she has been with Wilkinsburg, the Department has been trying to get grants for in-car cameras, and that she is working on a grant at the present time. The Lieutenant noted that when a car is out of service, officers use pool cars. She further stated that each officer has his or her own vehicle, and that when a car "goes down", there are not enough cars for officers on duty. She also noted that the Department has had several meetings with camera vendors. Mr. Taiani stated that officers should have training to ensure they are not exposed to liability for recording voices. The Chief responded that the vendor will train the officers, and that the Department has a blueprint from the City of Pittsburgh, where all street cameras were done with grants. Mr. Taiani responded that he would like to see cameras at the school buildings and Ms. Trice noted that she has concerns about the area by the busway, and that

there should be cameras there. Ms. Moore noted that several colleagues would like to tour the Police Department, and Ms. McCarthy-Johnson added that everyone should do a ride-along. She further stated that while she was in the building lobby taking applications for the toy drive, she learned a lot. Chief Coleman asked if there was a plan to again have someone staffing the lobby, and Ms. McCarthy-Johnson said that it's on her radar, and perhaps volunteers could be used.

Ms. Macklin reported that there were reports of crime around the Busway at the last TRID meeting. The Lieutenant responded that only 1 corner of Wallace Avenue is in Wilkinsburg, and that the Port Authority is responsible for the rest of the area. The Chief stated that she will give Council reports at the end of the year, to include 911 calls, and broken out by area. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson noted that this is a perception issue, and that crime in Wilkinsburg is down "tremendously". The Chief added that calls for service are down dramatically.

The Chief reported that that Police Department will start producing a newsletter with articles written by officers and that the Department also has a Facebook page with pictures and information from the Borough's 125th anniversary. In response to a question, the Chief responded that the newsletter will be distributed everywhere.

Ms. Grannemann asked about the nature of calls to the Police Department, and the Chief replied that they include identity theft, domestic violence, robberies, and PFAs. The Lieutenant noted that the statistics are down since 1993 and the Chief proposed getting an intern to help compile statistics. Ms. Macklin asked the Chief if a public meeting addressing domestic violence could be held, and the Chief replied that the Department could do that.

GENERAL MATTERS

1. Discussion – Proposed fee increase Resolution – Building, planning, and zoning.

It was noted that the \$30/unit fee for inspections for sale becomes prohibitively expensive, and Code Enforcement Director Dan Friedson agreed. Mr. Taiani noted that he would like to see a single cost per unit, even if that cost is higher. He further noted that it does not make sense for a landlord to obtain another occupancy permit if a tenant leaves within 6 months. Ms. Macklin asked Mr. Friedson if he had seen the Resolution, and he replied that he had not. Ms. Maclin also inquired if the UCC fee could be included in costs, and Mr. Friedson responded that if the Department of Labor changed the amount that can be charged, the Borough would need to adopt a new resolution. Mr. Shattuck asked if there is any reason not to have an application fee of \$40 for a zoning determination letter, and Ms. Grannemann suggested that we add this.

2. Discussion – Request from the WCDC to enhance tax exemption opportunities for the business district.

Mr. Shattuck noted that this is a condition that exists across the Borough, and is not limited to the commercial area. He stated that this is a difficult proposal, as there are not unique conditions for the area. He went on to say that Council has said that the TRID study was something that's been discussed and this proposal will use funds set aside for TRID. A great deal of discussion followed Mr. Shattuck's remarks. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson noted her concern that this proposal

would result in more churches and more nonprofits on Penn Avenue. She suggested that the Borough look at changing the assessed value, not offering a tax abatement. Mr. Shattuck responded that lowering the assessed value in advance would help developers, and is something we should do Borough-wide. Mr. Lefebvre asked if the WCDC's proposal makes the Borough more attractive to investors, and sets the Borough apart from bordering municipalities. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson stated that it has to be a total package, and Mr. Shattuck added that he would like the Borough to work with the WCDC on property assessments, and suggested a compromise with a 3-year abatement. Ms. Macklin noted that the spreadsheet examples in the proposal were from cities, and that she would like to see boroughs, townships, and municipalities more like Wilkesburg included as examples.

3. Discussion – Request to purchase Borough-owned property – 176-C-285.

The Borough has not yet received an appraisal on this property, so discussion was postponed to a future meeting.

4. Other

Ms. Macklin asked when the next library board meeting is scheduled, and the response was Tuesday, December 9 at 9:30 pm. She also asked about the status of the Eastridge renovations, and was told that this project was on hold until the budget was passed.

Ms. Grannemann noted that the Holiday Dinner for Council will be held December 11th at 6:30 at Roman Bistro, and that MADDADS will be caroling on December 13th from 5:00 to 6:00, and will start at Whitney and Center.

Ms. Macklin noted that the WCDC website indicates that they will be pursuing liquor licenses, and wondered how the WCDC is educating the public about this. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson responded that a referendum would not happen until 2016. Ms. Macklin stated that the Borough would need to put an ordinance on the books first, and Ms. McCarthy-Johnson responded that the WCDC would need to talk with Council.

Ms. Macklin reported that she spoke with former Borough Solicitor Pat McGrail about payments in lieu of taxes from Hosanna House, and Ms. McGrail stated that she sent all information she had regarding the court order to the Borough's current solicitor, Mr. Witherel.

A consensus of Council members agreed to the preparation of a proclamation recognizing Gregg Bowers, COO at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf for his work on behalf of the Borough.

Council recessed into Executive Session with 4 Department Heads at approximately 8:33 pm. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson indicated that no action would be taken afterwards.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, President McCarthy-Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:45 pm.

Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson
President Council

